

The Great Shadow

A Romance of Love and European War

By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Author of "SHERLOCK HOLMES," ETC.

CHAPTER V.

The Man From the Sea.

"AND the Emperor?" I asked.

"Will they spare him?"

"There's some talk of sending him to Elba, where he'll be out of mischief's way. But his officers—there are some of them who will not go off so lightly. Some deeds have been done during these last twenty years that have not been forgotten. There are a few old soldiers to be settled. But it's peace, peace! and he went once more, with his great band, hopping round his bonfire.

Well, we stayed some time with the Major, and then away we went down to the beach, Jim and I, talking about this great news and all that would come of it. He knew a little and I knew less, but we pored it all together and talked about how the prices would come down; how our brave fellows would return home; how the ships could go where they would in peace, and how we could pull all the coast towns down, for there was no enemy now to fear. So we chatted as we walked along the clean, hard sand, and looked out at the old North Sea. How little did Jim know at that moment, as he strode along by my side so full of health and of spirits, that he had reached the extreme summit of his life, and that from that hour all would be in truth, be upon the downward slope.

There was a little haze out to sea, for it had been very misty in the early morning, though the sun had shined in. As we looked seaward we suddenly saw the sail of a small boat break out through the fog and come bobbing along toward the land. A single man was seated in the stern and he waved about as she ran, as though he were of two minds whether to beach her or no. At last, determined that it may be, by our presence, he made it straight for us and her keel grated upon the shingle at our feet. He dropped his sail, climbed out and bowed up on to the beach.

"Great Britain!" he cried, "I believe!" said he, turning around and facing us.

He was a man somewhat above middle height, but exceedingly thin, with eyes wide and piercing and not closed together, a long, sharp nose and a thin mustache, and beneath a white and stiff as a china whisker. He was dressed in a suit of brown with brass buttons, and he wore high boots, which were all roughened and dulled by the sea-water.

His face and hair were so dark that he might have been a Spaniard, but as he raised his hat to us we saw that the upper part of his brow was quite white, and that it was from without that he had his awariness. He looked from one to the other of us, and his gray eyes had something in them which I had never seen before. You could see that he was a man who had seen a great deal of the world, and that he seemed to be a menace at the back of it, as if the answer were a right and not a favor.

"Great Britain!" he asked again, with a quick tap of his foot on the shingle.

"Yes," said I, while Jim burst out laughing.

"England? Scotland?"

"Scotland. But it's England past yonder trees."

"Bon! I know where I am now. I've been in a fog without a compass for nearly three days, and I didn't think I was ever to see land again." He spoke English glibly enough, but with some strange turn of speech from time to time.

"Where did you come from, then?" asked Jim.

"I was in a ship that was wrecked," he said shortly. "What is the town down yonder?"

"It is Berwick."

"Ah, well, I must get stronger before I can go further," he said, and he gave a lurch and would have fallen had he not caught the prow. On this he seated himself and looked round him with a face that was flushed, and two eyes that blazed like a wild beast's.

"Voleurs de la Garde!" he roared in a voice like a trumpet call, and then again, "Voleurs de la Garde!" He waved his hat above his head and, suddenly pitching forward upon his face on the shingle, he lay all hidden into a little brown heap.

Jim Horcroft and I stood and stared at each other. The coming of the man had been a surprise, but his questions, and now this sudden turn. We took him by a shoulder each and turned him upon his back. There he lay, with his jutting nose and his cat's whiskers, but his lips were bloodless and his breath would scarce shake a feather.

"He's dying, Jim," cried.

"Aye, for want of food and water. There's not a drop or a crumb in the bag. My sprang in and brought out a black leather bag. A large blue coat was the only thing in the bag. It was locked, but Jim had it open in an instant. It was half full of gold pieces.

Neither of us had ever seen so much before—no, nor a tenth part of it. There must have been hundreds of them, all bright new British sovereigns, and as we looked at them we were so full of gold that we had forgotten all about their owner, until a groan took our thoughts back to him. His lips were blue than ever, and his jaw had dropped. I can see his open mouth now, with its row of white, wolfish teeth.

"He's off!" cried Jim. "Here, run to the barn, and get a half a wheel of butter. Quick, man, or he's gone!" I'll loosen his things the while.

Away I tore, and was back in a minute with as much water as I could carry. I can see his eyes slowly, and he sat up, and rubbed his eyes slowly,

like a man who is waking from a deep sleep. But neither Jim nor I was looking at his face now, for our eyes were fixed on his uncovered chest.

There were two deep red puckers in it, one just below the collar-bone and the other about half-way down on the right side. The skin of his body was extremely white up to the brown line of his neck, and the angry crinkled spots looked the more vivid against it.

From above I could see that there was a corresponding pucker in the back at one place, but not at the other. Inexperience as I was, I could tell what that meant. Two bullets had pierced his chest—one had passed through it, and the other had remained inside.

But suddenly he staggered up to his feet and pulled his shirt to with a quick snatching glance at us.

"What have I been doing?" he asked. "I've been off my head. Take no notice of anything I may have said. I've been shouting."

"You shouted just before you fell."

"What did I shout?"

"I told him, though it bore little meaning to my mind. He looked sharply at us, and then he shrugged his shoulders.

"It's the words of a song," said he. "Well, the question is, what am I to do now? I didn't think I was so weak. Where did you get the water?"

I pointed towards the barn and he staggered off to the bank. There he lay down upon his face and he drank until I thought he would never have done. His long, skinny neck was stretched like a horse's and he made a loud, sipping noise with his lips. At last he got up, with a long sigh, and wiped his mustache with his sleeve.

"That's better," said he. "Have you any food?"

I had crammed two bits of oatmeal into my pocket when I left home, and I showed them to him. He squinted at them, puffed out his chest and patted his ribs with the flat of his hand.

"I am sure that I owe you exceedingly well," said he. "You have been very kind to a stranger. But I see that you have had occasion to open my bag."

"Ah, I have nothing there but just my little—how do you say it?—my savings. They are not much, but I must live on them, and I am determined to find something to do. Now one could live very quietly here, I should say. I could not have come upon a more peaceful place, without perhaps so much as a gentleman nearer than this town."

"You haven't told us yet who you are, what you come from, nor what you have been," said Jim bluntly.

The stranger looked him up and down with a critical eye. "My word but you would make a grenadier for a tank company," said he. "What you ask, I might take offense at it from other lips, but you have a right to know, since you have rescued me from a great emergency. My name is Bonaventure de Lapp. I am a soldier and a wanderer, by trade, and I have come from Dun-

deau, where you may see printed upon the boat."

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"You have a neighbor who has served the French, then?"

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"You are French, are you not?"

I asked, as we all walked up the hill together, he with his black bag in his hand and his long blue cloak slung over his shoulder.

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Can You Beat It?

By Maurice Ketten

YES, I AM STILL UNDER THE DOCTOR'S CARE.

CUT OUT THE DOCTORS AND YOU'LL BE ALLRIGHT

FOLLOW MY ADVICE CUT OUT THE DOCTORS

HELLO FRED!

HELLO JACK! ARE YOU SICK?

NO, WHY?

SEEMS TO ME YOU ARE LOOKING PALE

WHAT'S YOUR HURRY?

EXCUSE ME!

DOCTOR

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